

All About Walruses

The walrus is one of the largest species of **pinnipeds** and can be found in the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans around the Arctic.

Appearance

The Pacific walrus is larger than the Atlantic walrus with a male or bull growing up to 3.6 metres long and weighing up to 1700kg!

Walruses have thick, tough skin and a layer of blubber (fat) as insulation against the Arctic temperatures. Their broad heads have small eyes and a snout covered in 400 to 700 vibrissae (whiskers) which contain nerves to allow the walrus to identify prey on the murky seabed.

Tusks

Walruses have extended canine teeth with some growing up to 1 metre long. These tusks are an essential tool for walruses who use them to haul themselves onto sea ice, defend against predators and, for bulls, battle other males during the breeding season.

Habitat

Walruses are social animals who can live in large groups or herds of over 100 individuals. Two-thirds of their lives are spent in the icy water, hunting prey on gravelly seabeds in depths of up to 80 metres. The remainder of their time is spent on floating ice floes where they **haul out** to rest and nurse their young.

Diet

The diet of a walrus consists mainly of shellfish such as clams, snails, cockles and mussels, which they locate with their long vibrissae. They also happily hunt octopuses, shrimp, sea cucumbers, fish and, occasionally, seals.



Walrus



Walruses in the Wild

Reduced sea ice in warming seas means that walruses travel further to feed and are forced to **haul out** on land. This increases the risk of predation by polar bears and disturbance by humans, which is lethal for young walruses who can be crushed as heavy adults stampede away from the danger. The threat of stampedes increases further as the Arctic becomes noisier due to shipping, tourism and industry.

Their slow reproduction and depleting habitat have led to calls for walruses to be classified as endangered but this could be partly due to their transient lifestyle making collecting data a challenge.



All About Walruses

Family

Male and female walruses travel in separate herds for migration southwards, coming together for the breeding season. Then, they separate and the females travel back to the north for the spring and summer.

Battles for females occur during the annual breeding season with successful breeding happening on average just once every 3 years. With a gestation period of around 15–16 months, a single baby known as a calf is born during the spring.

The calf stays by its mother's side and travels by holding onto her neck. It is usually strong enough to swim independently within 4 weeks of birth but depends on its mother's nutrient-rich milk until it is about 18 months old. It will usually have tripled in weight in a year.

Did You Know...?

Since 2021, marine charities have asked the public to spot walrus herds using satellite imagery – they are so enormous that they can be seen from space!

Glossary

haul out: When pinnipeds leave the water to rest, reproduce or care for their calves.

pinniped: Aquatic carnivorous mammals (such as a seal or walrus) with all four limbs modified into flippers.

Questions

1. Where do walruses live? Tick **two**.

- ☐ Pacific Ocean
- ☐ Indian Ocean
- ☐ North Sea
- ☐ Atlantic Ocean

2. Draw **four** lines and match each subheading with its summary.

Habitat

Tusks are essential tools for walruses and have a variety of uses.

Diet

Warming seas are creating threats to walruses.

Tusks

Walruses spend lots of time in the water or on ice floes.

Walruses in the Wild

Walruses hunt for shellfish and other creatures.

3. Look at the section called **Family**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'without support'.

4. Fill in the missing words.

Walruses have thick, tough skin and a layer of _____ (fat) as insulation against the Arctic _____.

5. How many walruses can be found in a herd?

6. Explain how walruses use their vibrissae to find food.

7. How is the reduction of sea ice that floats in warming seas causing problems for walruses in the wild?

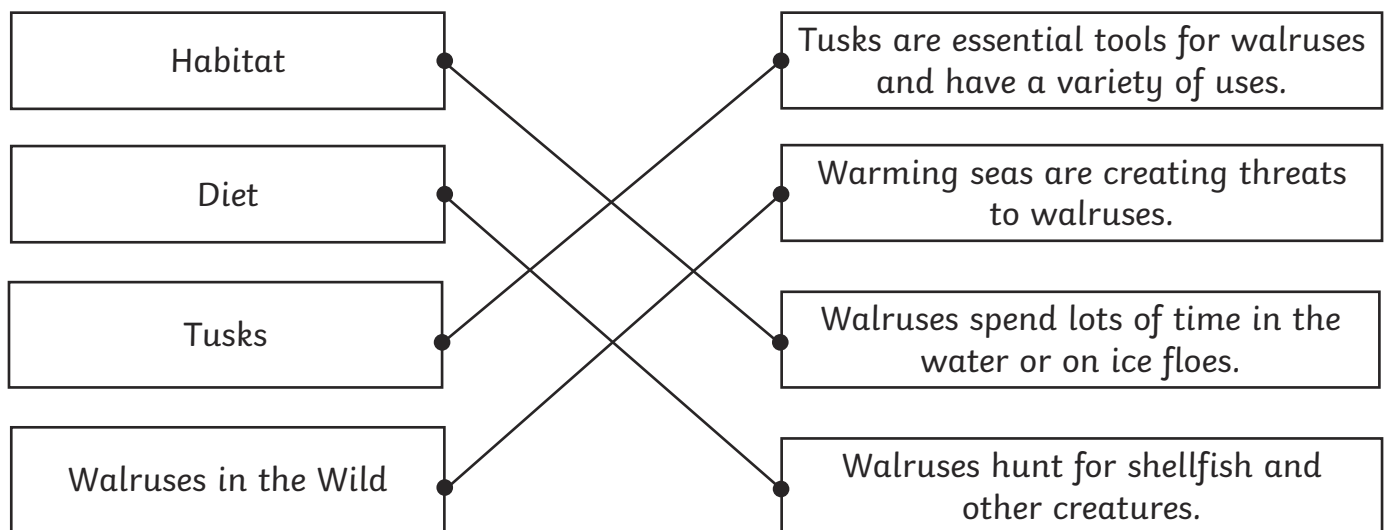
8. Summarise what you have learnt about a walrus's appearance in 25 words or fewer.

Answers

1. Where do walruses live? Tick **two**.

- ☒ **Pacific Ocean**
- ☐ Indian Ocean
- ☐ North Sea
- ☒ **Atlantic Ocean**

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading with its summary.



3. Look at the section called **Family**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'without support'.

independently

4. Fill in the missing words.

Walruses have thick, tough skin and a layer of **blubber** (fat) as insulation against the Arctic **temperatures**.

5. How many walruses can be found in a herd?

Over 100 individual walruses can be found in a herd.

6. Explain how walruses use their vibrissae to find food.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The walruses use their vibrissae to feel for food on the seabed.

7. How is the reduction of sea ice that floats in warming seas causing problems for walruses in the wild?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The sea ice is melting due to the warming seas and this means that walruses have to get out onto land where more of the walruses' predators live.

8. Summarise what you have learnt about a walrus's appearance in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Walruses have long whiskers with nerves in and are very big. They have thick skin, small eyes and tusks that can be 1 metre long.

All About Walruses

The walrus is one of the largest species of pinnipeds (marine mammals with front and rear flippers) and can be found in the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans around the Arctic.

Appearance

The Pacific walrus is larger than the Atlantic walrus with longer tusks. A male or bull Pacific walrus can grow up to 3.6 metres long and weigh as much as 1700kg!

Walruses have thick, tough skin that is up to 4cm thick around the neck and shoulders of males to protect from injury during fighting in the mating season. They also have a thick layer of blubber (fat) as insulation against the frigid Arctic temperatures.

Their broad heads have small eyes and a snout covered in 400 to 700 vibrissae (whiskers). These long whiskers contain nerves which allow the walrus to identify prey on the murky seabed.

Tusks

Walruses have extended canine teeth or tusks with some growing up to 1 metre long. Tusks are an essential tool for walruses who use them to haul themselves onto sea ice, defend against predators and, for bulls, battle other males during the breeding season.

Habitat

Walruses are social animals that can live in groups or herds of over 100 individuals. Two-thirds of their lives are spent in the icy water, hunting prey on gravelly seabeds (in depths of up to 80 metres!), around the coast or on ice shelves. The remainder of their time is spent on floating ice floes where they **haul out** of the water.

Diet

The diet of a walrus consists mainly of shellfish such as clams, snails, cockles and mussels which they locate with their long vibrissae. They also happily hunt octopuses, shrimp, sea cucumbers, fish and, occasionally, seals.



Walrus

Walruses in the Wild

Due to warming oceans, sea ice forms where the seabed is too deep for walruses to dive for food, forcing them to travel further and **haul out** along the coast to rest. This increases the risk of predation from polar bears and disturbance by humans; this is lethal for young walruses who are crushed as heavier adults stampede away from the perceived danger. The threat of stampedes increases as the Arctic becomes noisier due to shipping, tourism and industry.

Their slow reproduction and a habitat that is vulnerable to climate change, pollution and overfishing has led to calls for walruses to be classified as endangered. However, their

All About Walruses

Family

Males and females travel in separate herds for migration southwards, coming together for the breeding season. Then, they separate and the females travel back to the north for the spring and summer.

Fighting for females occurs during the annual walrus breeding season with successful breeding happening on average just once every 3 years. With a gestation period of around 15–16 months, a single baby known as a calf is born from mid-April to mid-June.

Walrus mothers are protective of their young and the calf stays by its mother's side constantly. It travels by holding onto her neck but is usually strong enough to swim independently within 4 weeks. They begin to eat solid foods at 6 months, although a calf depends on its mother's nutrient-rich milk until it is about 18 months old. It will usually have tripled in weight in a year.

transient lifestyle makes collecting data on this a challenge. Since 2021, marine charities have asked the public for help spotting walrus herds using satellite imagery – they are so enormous that they can be seen from space! This information enables scientists to locate and gather data on the walrus herds to help protect them in the future.

Glossary



haul out: When pinnipeds leave the water to rest, reproduce or care for their calves.

Questions

1. Which marine animals are **not** part of a walrus's diet? Tick one.

- ☐ octopuses
- ☐ shellfish
- ☐ penguins
- ☐ seals

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading with its summary.

Habitat

Walruses are enormous and have thick skin.

Appearance

The risk of stampedes is an increasing threat to young walruses.

Family

Walruses spend most of their time in the water.

Walruses in the Wild

Walrus calves are rare and stay with their mother constantly.

3. Look at the section called **Tusks**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'to pull with a lot of effort'.

4. Fill in the missing words.

Walruses are _____ animals that can live in groups of over 100 .

_____.

5. List **two** ways in which hauling out on land is dangerous for walruses.

- _____
- _____

6. Explain how the appearance of a walrus helps it survive in its environment.

7. Look at the section called **Walruses in the Wild**.

What do you think is the biggest threat to walruses? Explain your answer.

8. What effect do you think this text will have on the reader?

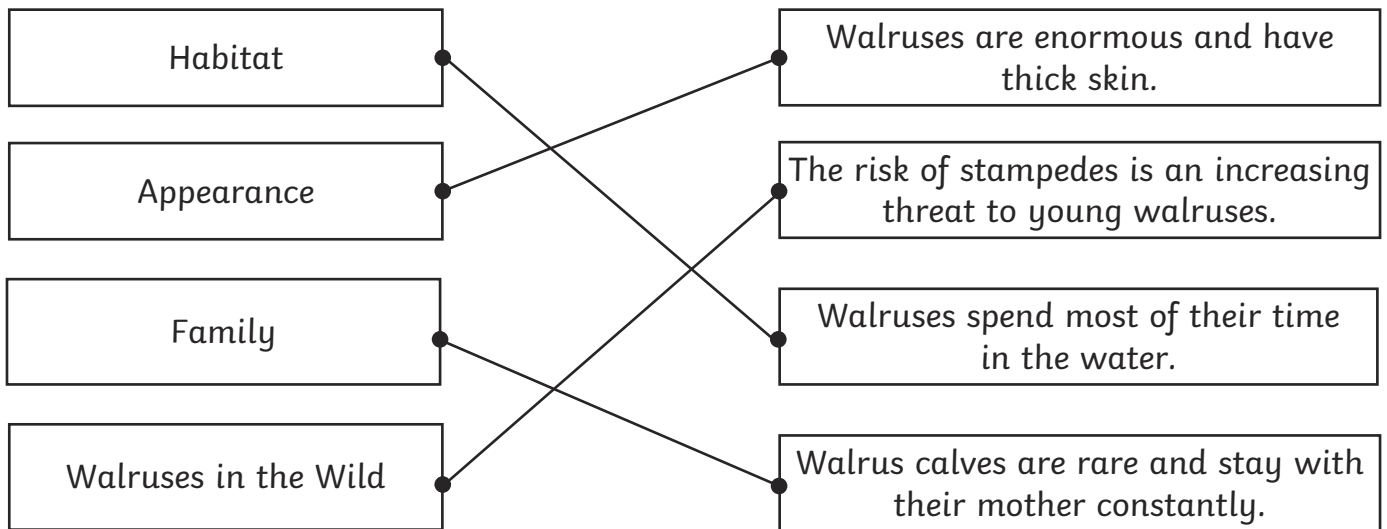
9. Summarise what you have learnt about walrus habitats in 25 words or fewer.

Answers

1. Which marine animals are **not** part of a walrus's diet? Tick one.

- ☐ octopuses
☐ shellfish
☒ **penguins**
☐ seals

2. Draw four lines and match each sub-heading with its summary.



3. Look at the section called **Tusks**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'to pull with a lot of effort'.

haul

4. Fill in the missing word.

Walruses are **gregarious** animals that can live in groups of over 100 **individuals**.

5. List **two** ways in which hauling out on land is dangerous for walruses.

Accept both of the following answers:

- **increases the risk of predation from polar bears;**
- **increases disturbance by humans.**

6. Explain how the appearance of a walrus helps it survive in its environment.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The appearance of a walrus helps it survive in its environment because it uses its long tusks for protection and getting out of the water, it has thick skin and a layer of fat called blubber to keep it warm.

7. Look at the section called **Walruses in the Wild**.

What do you think is the biggest threat to walruses? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the biggest threat to walruses is climate change as it is warming up the sea and changing how and where walruses feed. This puts them in more danger from people and polar bears.

8. What effect do you think this text will have on the reader?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that this text will make a reader want to learn more about walruses and see if they can help scientists with spotting them from space.

9. Summarise what you have learnt about walrus habitats in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Walruses spend two-thirds of their time in the water hunting prey and the rest on ice floes. They can live in groups of over 100.

All About Walruses

The walrus is one of the largest pinnipeds (marine mammals with front and rear flippers) and can be found in the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans around the Arctic.

Appearance

There are two subspecies of walrus: the Atlantic walrus and the Pacific walrus which is slightly larger with longer tusks. A male or bull Pacific walrus can grow up to 3.6 metres long and weigh as much as 1700kg!

Walruses have thick, tough skin that is up to 4cm thick around the neck and shoulders of males to protect from injury during the fighting of the mating season. They also have a thick layer of blubber (fat) as insulation against the frigid temperatures of their habitat.

Their broad heads have small eyes and a snout covered in around 400 to 700 vibrissae (whiskers). These long whiskers contain nerves to allow the walrus to identify its prey on the murky seabed.

Tusks

Walruses are easily recognisable because of their extended canine teeth or tusks (with some growing up to 1 metre in length). Tusks are an essential tool for walruses who use them to haul themselves onto sea ice, as a defence against predators and, for bulls, to fight with other males during the breeding season.

Habitat

Walruses are gregarious animals and can live in groups of over 100 individuals. Two-thirds of their lives are spent in the icy water, hunting prey on gravelly seabeds in depths of up to 80m, around the coast or ice shelves. The remainder of their time is spent on floating ice floes where they haul out of the water – leaving the water to rest, reproduce or care for their calves.

Diet

The diet of a walrus consists mainly of shellfish such as clams, snails, cockles and mussels which they locate with their long vibrissae. However, they happily hunt for other creatures including octopuses, shrimp, sea cucumbers, fish and, occasionally, seals.



Walrus



Family

Males and females travel in separate herds for migration southwards, coming together for the breeding season. Then, they separate and the females travel back to the north for the spring and summer months.

Fighting between bulls occurs during the annual walrus breeding season but successful breeding happens on average just once every 3 years. The gestation period is around 15–16 months with a single baby known as a calf born around mid-April to mid-June.

Due to the rarity of pregnancy, walrus mothers are protective of their young and the calf stays by its mother's side. At first, it travels by holding onto her neck but is usually strong enough to swim independently within 4 weeks. Hunting for solid foods begins at 6 months, although a calf depends on its mother's nutrient-rich milk until it is about 18 months old; it will usually have tripled in weight in a year.

All About Walruses



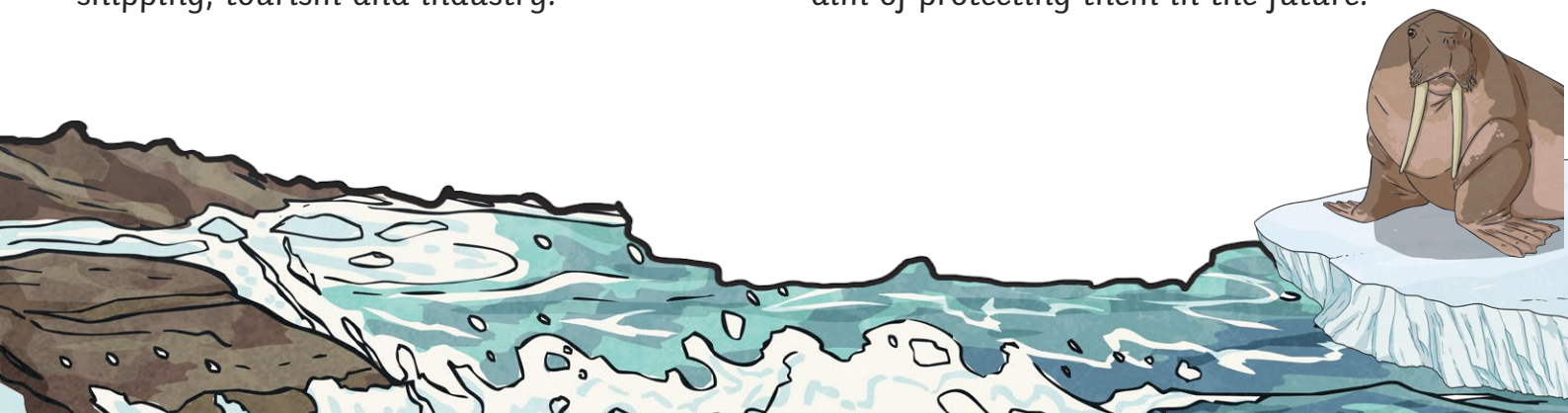
Walruses in the Wild

Walruses haul out in their hundreds onto sea ice, to rest within range of their feeding grounds and to nurse their young. Unfortunately, due to warming seas, sea ice now forms where the seabed is too deep for a walrus to dive for food, forcing them to travel further to feed and haul out along the coast to rest.

Hauling out on land increases the risk of predation from polar bears and makes disturbance by humans more likely. In the immense herds of enormous animals, this is lethal for young or weak walruses who are inevitably crushed as their larger, heavier herd mates stampede away from the perceived danger. The threat of stampede is still present with off-shore haul outs too, as the Arctic becomes more noisy due to shipping, tourism and industry.

Now, only the Inuit (Indigenous people from the Canadian Arctic) are allowed to hunt walrus but they are still considered a species under threat. Their slowness to breed and the fact that their habitat is vulnerable to climate change, pollution and overfishing has led to calls for them to be classified as endangered.

Their transient lifestyle has made collecting data and information about walruses challenging for scientists. However since 2021, marine charities have been asking members of the public for help spotting walrus herds using satellite imagery: they are so enormous that they can be seen from space! This information enables scientists to locate herds and gather data on the numbers and activities of walruses with the aim of protecting them in the future.



Questions

1. Which of these is **not** a threat to walruses? Tick one.

- ☐ tourism
- ☐ climate change
- ☐ gravel seabeds
- ☐ stampedes

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading with its related fact.

Appearance

The extended canine teeth of a walrus are essential tools for its survival.

Family

Walrus herds can be hard to track and collect information on.

Tusks

Successful breeding only occurs on average once every 3 years.

Walruses in the Wild

The physical appearance of a walrus shows that it is adapted to its environment.

3. Look at the section called **Walruses in the Wild**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'staying in one place for a short time before moving on'.

4. Fill in the missing **words**.

Their broad heads have small eyes and a snout _____ in around 400 to 700 _____ (whiskers).

5. List **two** ways in which a calf relies on its mother.

• _____

• _____

6. Explain what a 'stampede' is and why it is a problem for walrus calves.

7. Which section of the text do you think is the most important and why?

8. What do you think historians may gain from this text in the future?

9. Write **three** sentences to sum up the section **Walruses in the Wild**.

10. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

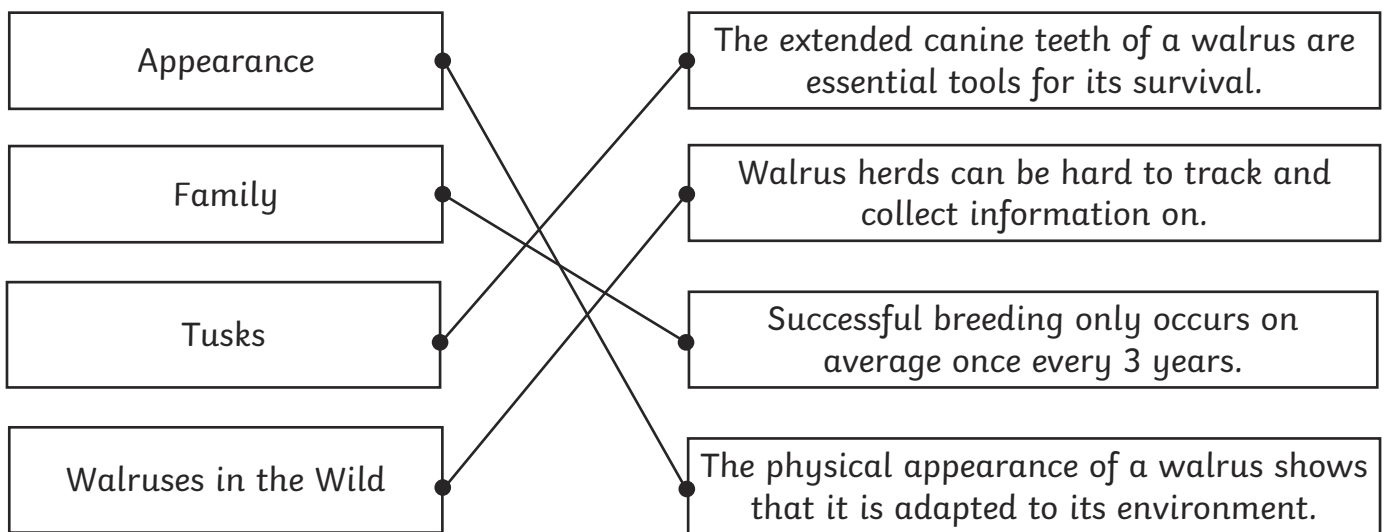
	True	False
Walruses use their tusks to dig up the seabed when looking for food.		
Walruses migrate south during the autumn and winter months.		
Walruses are insulated against the freezing temperatures of the Arctic.		
Walrus calves are born regularly.		
A hunting permit is needed for people to hunt walruses.		

Answers

1. Which of these is **not** a threat to walruses? Tick one.

- ☐ tourism
- ☐ climate change
- ☒ **gravel seabeds**
- ☐ stampedes

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading with its related fact.



3. Look at the section called **Walruses in the Wild**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'staying in one place for a short time before moving on'.

transient

4. Fill in the missing words.

Their broad heads have small eyes and a snout **covered** in around 400 to 700 **vibrissae** (whiskers).

5. List **two** ways in which a calf relies on its mother.

Accept both of the following: it travels by holding onto her neck until it can swim independently and it depends on their mother's milk until they are around 18 months old.

6. Explain what a 'stampede' is and why it is a problem for walrus calves.

Pupils' own responses, such as: A stampede is when all of the walruses rush in the same direction at the same time when they are scared. It is a problem for calves because they get crushed by the adults.

7. Which section of the text do you think is the most important and why?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the section called 'Family' is the most important as it gives information about how rare walrus calves are and explains their migration.

8. What do you think historians may gain from this text in the future?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that historians will gain a lot of important information about the habits of walruses and the threats they face. There might be no walruses to be studied in the future.

9. Write **three** sentences to sum up the section **Walruses in the Wild**.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Climate change means the sea ice they rest on forms further away from where they feed. Walruses have to haul out on land and become at risk from polar bears. Scientists find it difficult to track walrus herds so they have asked the public to help.

10. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Walruses use their tusks to dig up the seabed when looking for food.		✓
Walruses migrate south during the autumn and winter months.	✓	
Walruses are insulated against the freezing temperatures of the Arctic.	✓	
Walrus calves are born regularly.		✓
A hunting permit is needed for people to hunt walruses.		✓

Award 2 marks for all five correct.

Award 1 mark for four correct.